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**Activities of the United Nations Human Settlements
Programme, including coordination matters**

Activities of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme

Sixth session of the World Urban Forum

Report by the Executive Director

Summary

The present report summarizes the issues discussed by the World Urban Forum at its sixth session, which was held in Naples, Italy, from 1 to 7 September 2012, together with the recommendations adopted by the Forum at that session. The full report of the sixth session is set out in the note by the secretariat (HSP/GC/24/INF/2).

* HSP/GC/24/1.

I. Introduction

A. The world's premier conference on urban issues

1. The World Urban Forum was established to examine one of the most pressing issues facing the world today: rapid urbanization and its impact on communities, cities, economies, climate change and policies. The Forum is organized and convened by the Executive Director of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) pursuant to paragraph 10 of resolution 18/5 of February 2001, in which the Commission on Human Settlements requested the Executive Director to promote a merger of the Urban Environment Forum and the International Forum on Urban Poverty into a new urban forum, with a view to strengthening the coordination of international support to the implementation of the Habitat Agenda. Subsequently, the United Nations General Assembly affirmed, in its resolution 56/206, that the Forum would be a non-legislative technical forum in which experts could exchange views in the years when the Governing Council of UN-Habitat does not meet. At the same session, the General Assembly, in paragraph 7 of its resolution 56/205, encouraged local authorities and other Habitat Agenda partners to participate, as appropriate, in the World Urban Forum in its role as an advisory body to the Executive Director of UN-Habitat.

2. The Forum is held in a different host city and country biennially, drawing on a wide range of experts from every walk of life. Participants at the Forum include Habitat Agenda partners; national governments; local authorities; members of national, regional and international associations of local authorities; Global Parliamentarians on Habitat; non-governmental organizations; community-based organizations; media organizations; human settlements professionals; research institutions and academies of science; professional associations; the private, business and non-profit sectors; foundations; relevant United Nations organizations and other international agencies.

3. The Forum promotes the strong participation of Habitat Agenda partners and relevant international programmes, funds and agencies, thus ensuring their inclusion in the identification of new issues, the sharing of lessons learned and the exchange of best practices and good policies. It is also intended to re-examine the manner in which UN-Habitat and its partners contribute to guiding and enriching policy work on sustainable urbanization through an open dialogue.

4. New ideas and working models are identified in the Forum and these are fed into the medium-term strategic and institutional plan of UN-Habitat and form part of the subsequent work programme.

5. World Urban Forum's participation rose from 1,200 delegates at the inaugural session in Nairobi in 2002, to over 4,000 in Barcelona, Spain, in 2004 and over 10,000 in Vancouver, Canada, in 2006. The number of participants steadied at 8,000 in Nanjing, China, in 2008, reached almost 14,000 at the fifth session in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 2010, and over 8,000 attended the sixth session in Naples, Italy, in September 2012. Some 100 countries were represented at the third session, 146 at the fourth and the number rose again to 150 at the fifth session. The sixth session saw a record high of 152 countries represented in Naples. The seventh session of the Forum will take place in Medellin, Colombia, in 2014.

6. The third session of the Forum, in Vancouver in 2006, which marked the thirtieth anniversary of UN-Habitat, focused on sustainable urbanization and inclusive cities. One of the Forum's messages was that the urban population of developing countries was set to double from 2 billion to 4 billion in the next 30 years, which would require the equivalent planning, financing, and servicing facilities for a new city of 1 million people to be built every week for the next 30 years.

7. The theme of the fourth session of the Forum, held in Nanjing in 2008, was harmonious urbanization. At that session it became clear that a society cannot be harmonious if large sections of its population are deprived of their basic rights, while others live in opulence. An important message from the session was that harmony in cities cannot be achieved if the price of urban living is paid by the environment. The concept of harmony requires the synchronization and integration of all the Earth's assets: physical, environmental, cultural, historical, social and human.

8. The fifth session of the Forum was held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil's second largest city, and it built upon the technical and substantive lessons of the previous four sessions. It focused on the theme "Right to the city: bridging the urban divide". At that session, participants shared perspectives and viewpoints on the relevance of the concept, identifying what is needed to bridge the urban divide and to facilitate a prompt and sustainable transition from a partially inclusive city to one that is fully inclusive.

9. The World Urban Forum is undoubtedly the UN-Habitat premier advocacy platform to promote sustainable urbanization and share solutions to urban challenges.

B. Overview of the sixth session

10. The sixth session of the Forum, held in Naples in September 2012, was organized and convened by the Executive Director of UN-Habitat in collaboration with the Government of Italy, the Campania Region, the Province of Naples and the Municipality of Naples. The “Fondazione Campania dei Festival” was the local entity in charge of the coordination of the event.

11. At the session, the Forum focused on various issues related to the central theme of the session, “The urban future” and was conceived as a platform where various segments of society could discuss, learn, practice, agree and disagree on ways to build a more prosperous urban future for our cities. Participants identified initiatives and commitments that could be effectively implemented to shape the cities of the future to be more democratic, just, sustainable and humane.

12. As in earlier sessions, the Forum provided a global platform for UN-Habitat and its partners to consider the dynamic of emerging demographic shifts and their implications for different segments of society including young people, women and indigenous groups.

13. There was broad consensus on the need to foster global prosperity and, in so doing, to broaden the discourse on ways of improving the quality of urban life. In thematic terms, urban job creation, growing inequality and deepening poverty as well as the roles of infrastructure, policies and institutions were all discussed broadly and intensively.

14. In particular, the Forum examined in a systematic manner the existing and emerging factors that contribute to prosperity, exploring the triggers that generate desired positive changes. Participants considered, for example, the kind of strategies deployed by successful cities, the obstacles that can prevent cities from achieving prosperity and ways in which cities can change course and move to a trajectory of progress. These discussions and emerging issues are set out in the various reports of the session.

15. The path to the sixth session of the Forum started with a global online discussion, or “e-debate”, which generated contributions in the form of ideas and key messages that were used for the preparation of the session.¹ The online discussion was initiated during the fifth session of the Forum, and was conceived as an intellectual precursor to the main event. For the sixth session, it opened on 7 May 2012 and closed on 7 June 2012 and was coordinated by the UN-Habitat branches and dialogue focal points. The e-debate attracted more than 25,000 contributions and was held on the world urban forum website (www.worldurbanforum.org).

16. Prior to the sixth session, the concept notes² for the main meetings, together with networking, training and side events lists, were published on the UN-Habitat website (www.unhabitat.org/wuf). Several e-newsletters were disseminated to promote and provide information about the Forum. For the first time in the history of the Forum, links to promotional material and the websites of participating partners were posted, including networking information. The full programme providing details of all the meetings was issued online as information became available and well in advance of the opening of the Forum.

17. The organization of several new national urban forums, including in Kuwait, Rwanda and Colombia, and regional conferences supported the preparations for national and regional participation at and contribution to the sixth session.

18. In response to Governing Council resolution 23/5 of 15 April 2011, the role of the World Urban Forum Advisory Group was strengthened. The new terms of reference³ for the Advisory Group ensure sustained pursuit of the outcomes of sessions of the Forum in the intersessional period, the exploitation of linkages and synergies between the Governing Council and the World Urban Forum and, by extension, the strategic direction and work of UN-Habitat. The strengthened Advisory Group also assures the link between the host countries of two consecutive sessions of the Forum.

19. As representatives of the member States of the Governing Council, the members of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to UN-Habitat in Nairobi, together with representatives of other Habitat Agenda partners, provided guidance to UN-Habitat in preparing the agenda, dialogue

¹ See HSP/GC/24/INF/2, annex I, for the e-debate final report.

² Ibid., annex II.

³ Ibid., annex III.

themes and programme for the sixth session of the Forum. An expanded multi-partner representation has been endorsed to further strengthen the engagement of Habitat Agenda partners.

20. As at previous sessions, the latest issue of the UN-Habitat flagship report, *State of the World's Cities 2012–2013: Prosperity of Cities*,⁴ was launched at the sixth session in Naples. In order to measure present and future progress of cities towards the prosperity path, UN-Habitat proposes the introduction of a new tool, the city prosperity index, together with a conceptual matrix, known as the “wheel of prosperity”, both of which are intended to assist decision makers to assess the current status of progress, to measure future progress and to design clear policy interventions to achieve progress.

21. Over 440 events were held during the sixth session, including dialogues, round tables, special sessions, assemblies and networking, training, parallel and side events. An international exhibition with 80 booths,⁵ organized in an area of 7,135 m², was open to the public and registered participants. For the first time, UN-Habitat had a corporate events booth attached to its exhibition showcasing its mandate and work. An intense programme of events was organized daily in the exhibition area by UN-Habitat, the host country and other partners. With a total of 26,956 visitors, the exhibition was the liveliest area of the Forum and was where a large number of “transactions” and networking took place that contributed to the creation of many new partnerships.

22. Overall attendance at the session totalled 8,209 participants, representing a record high number of 152 countries.⁶ For the first time in the history of the Forum, most of the participants were from outside the host country. Naples was able to attract more international experts than ever before. Out of every 10 participants in Naples, only four were Italian, whereas at the fifth session, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, for example, the proportion was seven Brazilians out of every 10 participants. This clearly demonstrates the geographic diversity at the sixth session.

23. In terms of national government participation, 112 official delegations attended the sixth session, with 433 participants from different ministerial departments.⁷ The majority (72 per cent) of the participants from national ministries (not including federal ministries) was composed of representatives of ministries that were directly related to the urban sector (housing, urban development, cities and local authorities or works, roads, transport and infrastructure). Participants from environment-related ministries made up almost 5 per cent, while participants from other ministries, such as foreign affairs (not including host country-based embassies and diplomatic missions) or education/university, public administration, internal affairs, vocational training, health, finance, economic cooperation, development, youth, sport, women, security, cooperatives and traditional affairs, commerce and agriculture, amounted to some 23 per cent. This last figure demonstrates the Forum's capacity to mobilize a variety of governmental constituencies, beyond the traditional strictly urban-related ones, in support of an integrated and holistic approach necessary to address the complexity of the urban environment.

24. More than 80 per cent of the world's least developed countries were represented at the sixth session: 39 out of a total of 48, with 487 participants⁸ and four exhibition booths. There was a total of 23 speakers (12 male, 11 female) from 13 different least developed countries in the 25 main meetings at the session. The Government of France provided financial support for the participation of certain representatives of least developed countries.

25. Compared to the fifth session, there was a slight increase in the number of female participants, thanks in part to the gender assembly that was convened on 2 September 2012. During the sixth session, UN-Habitat established an advisory group to advise the Executive Director on gender-related issues. The newly-formed independent Advisory Group on Gender Issues is a critical instrument that will enable stakeholders to support, and hold UN-Habitat accountable for delivering on, its commitment to mainstreaming gender equality in human settlements issues.

26. The Forum also witnessed the launch of *State of the Urban Youth 2012–2013: Youth in the Prosperity of Cities*,⁹ during the youth assembly convened on 2 September 2012. The report notes that inequality, unequal opportunities as well as the issues of employment and underemployment are by far the greatest challenges faced by urban young people in the twenty-first century. The Government of

⁴ Available from www.unhabitat.org/pmss/listItemDetails.aspx?publicationID=3387.

⁵ For the list of exhibitors, see HSP/GC/24/INF/2, annex IV.

⁶ For the complete list of participating countries, see HSP/GC/24/INF/2.

⁷ For figures relating to the participation of national ministries, see HSP/GC/24/INF/2, annex VI.

⁸ For the complete list of participating least developed countries, see HSP/GC/24/INF/2, annex VII.

⁹ Available at www.unhabitat.org/pmss/listItemDetails.aspx?publicationID=3397.

Norway sponsored the report as well as the participation of a number of young people in the youth assembly.

27. Participants at the youth assembly approved and issued a youth statement,¹⁰ which was read out during the closing ceremony for the event, and a Naples 2012 declaration on urban water and sanitation¹¹ and urban youth and mobility.¹²

28. There was a significant increase in the number of representatives of local authorities who attended the session, which suggests that these key players in transforming cities into better living spaces benefit from the exchange of best practices, knowledge and tools that takes place at sessions of the Forum. The mayors' round table was attended by more than 300 representatives, while the United Nations Advisory Committee of Local Authorities (UNACLA) convened its regular meeting in Naples and a special session on sustainable urban mobility, as well as a parallel event on job creation and local productivity.

29. The Forum's engagement with the United Nations system was strengthened by the convening of a well-attended United Nations high-level inter-agency meeting and effective promotion and facilitation of United Nations participation in various discussions and networking, side and training events, which demonstrates the increasing recognition of the importance of cities in the sustainable development agenda. There was a significant increase in the number of speakers from the United Nations system in Naples compared to the fifth session. The percentage of United Nations entities exhibiting at the Forum was also significant. Parallel events on urban development and health and on urban risk reduction and cities resilience were organized in collaboration with the World Health Organization and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, respectively.

30. The participation of the private sector was higher at the sixth session than at the fifth, reflecting the increasing interest of the business community in urban issues and in being involved in the international discussion thereon. Chief executive officers and other business representatives made interventions in many meetings and companies showcased innovative solutions to urban challenges in the exhibition area. A business assembly was organized focusing on leveraging innovation for urban futures. The private sector supported the event with sponsorship from GDF Suez, Siemens, Arcadis, Lafarge, Veolia Environmental Services and the French electricity distribution network provider, Électricité Réseau Distribution France (ERDF), to the World Urban Campaign. Private local companies were also represented by Banco di Napoli, Green Mobility Sharing and Lete.

31. The number of media representatives attending the sixth session was also the highest ever, amounting to nearly 5 per cent of the total number of participants. Social media was for the first time fully integrated in all Forum communications. Almost 80,000 people were reached through Facebook during the Forum week and a total of 1,820 new followers were added on Twitter, which represents 22 per cent of the total number of UN-Habitat followers on Twitter by the end of the event. This increase represents an outstanding achievement in strengthening of the UN-Habitat advocacy, outreach and communications strategy, which should be considered further in planning for future sessions.

32. The international media partner for the sixth session of the World Urban Forum was South-South News (www.southsouthnews.com) and additional support was provided by two of the main local media partners: Radio CRC (www.radiocrc.com) and Radio Napoli 24 (www.radionapoli24.it).

33. For the first time, the main sessions of the Forum were broadcast on Livestream, allowing people from around the world to follow the discussions and giving virtual access to a wide audience with increased impact as a consequence. The presence of United Nations Television and South-South News enabled the creation of an online television channel, which people can still tune into to watch meetings at the session.¹³ Several paperless initiatives were also implemented to reduce the costs and environmental impacts of the event. Broadcasting the main meetings live provided a significant contribution to making the session even more inclusive.

34. The World Urban Campaign was represented at the Forum in over 40 activities organized by its members. As a first step of engagement towards the third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III), a "Manifesto for cities: the urban future we want" was presented in one of the main meetings.¹⁴ Since its launch in March 2010 at the fifth session of the

¹⁰ HSP/GC/24/INF/2, annex VIII.

¹¹ Ibid., annex IX.

¹² Ibid., annex X.

¹³ All the main meetings of the sixth session of the Forum are available from webtv.un.org.

¹⁴ Available from www.unhabitat.org/categories.asp?catid=708.

Forum, the World Urban Campaign has been strengthened both in terms of legitimacy and the level of its partners' engagement. The eighth meeting of the World Urban Campaign eighth steering committee meeting was also convened during the sixth session.

35. Awareness-raising and mobilization of citizens and the general public were promoted through the "I'm a city changer" campaign. A variety of campaign activities were organized during the sixth session in Naples,¹⁵ including the opening of the city's first bike lane and the launch of the Habitat Cup, a new initiative to promote urban development and youth empowerment through sports.

36. A cinema room and a city changer room were created to provide space to showcase UN-Habitat and partners' projects. The Urban Film Festival was hosted in the cinema room, showcasing selected films from film festivals and partners around the world.

37. The "Open UN-Habitat" transparency initiative was presented at the sixth session (www.open.unhabitat.org). The initiative is a result of a process initiated by UN-Habitat in 2011 to increase transparency, accountability and efficiency. To that end, the Programme signed up to the International Aid Transparency Initiative, resolving to openly publish all project data. The "Open UN-Habitat" website uses mapping tools and a search engine to make project information easily accessible and has been built using open source technology. The project is supported by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency.

38. The Global Network on Safer Cities was also launched during the sixth session, on 3 September 2012. The Global Network will support local, national and regional authorities to address the current and future challenges that cities are facing. The network is intended to target multiple countries and selected cities and to report to an inclusive coalition of stakeholders enhancing urban safety. This will contribute to the exchange of knowledge and experiences on urban crime and violence prevention among cities and citizens, transform societies so that they become more inclusive, and encourage a culture of crime prevention.

39. The Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme, financed by the European Commission and its Intra-ACP funds, organized specific activities to showcase work done in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific to improve the lives of the urban poor.

40. Also for the first time, the Scroll of Honours Awards took place during the closing ceremony of the sixth session to increase their visibility and the engagement of Habitat Agenda partners therein.

41. UN-Habitat signed 12 memorandums of understanding during the sixth session, strengthening its framework of collaboration with governments, local authorities and other entities.

42. A total of 261 volunteers contributed enthusiastically to making the sixth session of the Forum happen. They were given central stage during the closing ceremony in order to thank them for their involvement and to highlight the need to empower young people and harness their potential. The average age of the volunteers, of whom 65 per cent were women, was 26 years old.

43. The concept of the legacy of the World Urban Forum for the host city has been introduced as an important outcome of the event and included in the selection criteria for future host cities. Naples has already defined its legacy project focusing on young people, job creation and the improvement of public spaces.

44. A transparent selection process and criteria for future hosts of the Forum have been established taking into consideration social, economic and logistical aspects. A call for expressions of interest in hosting the seventh session was published in July 2012, which benefitted from lessons learned from previous sessions in terms of the selection criteria. Medellin, in Colombia, was selected as the host city of the seventh session of the Forum to be held in 2014.

45. A special focus was maintained on Habitat III throughout the meetings at the sixth session, especially in the round tables, assemblies and special sessions, in order to stimulate a forward-looking discussion among the different constituencies of partners as a contribution to the road map for the milestone global conference to be held in 2016.

II. Overall emerging issues

46. The substantive meetings provided an excellent platform for constructive policy exchanges between all Habitat Agenda partners. There were intense and exciting debates on urban planning, equity and prosperity, job creation, urban mobility, youth and gender empowerment and a range of other related issues.

¹⁵ Details of the campaign in Naples are available from www.imacitychanger.org.

47. The main challenges confronting cities and towns all over the world include unemployment, especially among young people; social and economic inequalities; unsustainable patterns of energy consumption; urban sprawl; and increasing emissions of greenhouse gases.
48. Cities and towns in developing countries face additional challenges, including high percentages of people living in slums; the expansion and dominance of the informal sector; inadequate basic urban services, especially in terms of water, sanitation and energy; social and political conflict over land and natural resources; high levels of vulnerability to natural disasters; and poor transport systems.
49. There is a positive correlation between urbanization and development. Urbanization is a powerful engine that can transform production capacities and income levels in developing countries, but it requires appropriate support and guidance in order to strengthen development. A shift of mind-set on the part of decision makers is required so that urbanization is prioritized at the top of national agendas and seen as a positive asset driving development.
50. In developing countries, the urban sprawl that tends to produce large informal suburban neighbourhoods and generate new uncontrolled urban corridors is the result of lack of planned expansion of the city. The results of urban sprawl in different parts of the developing world are congested city centres and physically chaotic urban peripheries, unsustainable energy consumption patterns and an inefficient spatial structure that leads to loss of productivity.
51. Planned urbanization requires robust political and institutional capacity to manage differences, land disputes and conflicts of interest. In a democratic context, planned urbanization requires political legitimacy, trust and the rule of law.
52. Public space is the most important common good in cities and the challenge of free-riders must be effectively addressed in a continuous manner. Without a clear understanding of the importance of public goods, there can be no capacity to plan urban development effectively.
53. The transition from spontaneous urbanization to planned urbanization requires robust governance capacity at both the national and local levels. If cities and towns are to play their proper role as drivers or engines of national economic and social development, these challenges have to be addressed through effective planning and governance.
54. Adequate technical capacity is required to plan, develop and manage a city in tandem with institutional capacity, since the effectiveness of urban planning, development and management can only be guaranteed by robust legal and administrative frameworks. Effective urban rules are crucial to guarantee adequate social integration and avoid segregation.
55. National urban policies provide a framework for future urban development and should ensure that the national and local benefits of urbanization are maximized while potential negative impacts are mitigated.
56. Planned city enlargements are necessary to address the widespread phenomenon of urban informality, especially in rapidly urbanizing contexts, including the chaotic expansion of urban peripheries.
57. Sustainable urban mobility and energy are central to achieving sustainable development and enhancing economic growth and integration while respecting the environment and improving accessibility.
58. Access to land for the urban poor, affordable housing and a strengthened provision of public spaces and services are fundamental elements embedded in the concept of the “Right to the city” fostered since the fifth session of the Forum and necessary to achieving equitable and sustainable urbanization.
59. The prosperity of cities should not be measured solely in economic terms, but should include other vital aspects that have an impact on prosperity. UN-Habitat has launched the city prosperity index, a tool that is intended to comprehensively measure urban well-being.
60. Urgent attention should be paid to the urban economy and to job creation, in particular. In that respect, deliberate efforts should be made to reduce “urban diseconomies” at all levels, including through the empowerment of women and young people.
61. In the face of the need for an urban agenda for the twenty-first century that can respond to the new urbanization challenges and opportunities, Habitat III, in 2016, will represent a milestone in reinvigorating global commitment to sustainable urbanization.

62. The World Urban Campaign is consolidating and strengthening its capacity as an innovative tool to engage and mobilize new and emerging groups together with traditional partners in sessions of the World Urban Forum and strategic medium-term processes, such as the post-2015 development agenda and Habitat III. Other key strategic platforms, including National Habitat committees, national urban forums, national urban campaigns and the “I’m a city changer” campaign, will continue to promote the Forum and advance the Habitat Agenda and the work of UN-Habitat around the world.
